

CHILD WELFARE CHANGE TIMELINE

Governor Heineman Announces Directives

June 21, 2006: Governor Heineman announced new child welfare directives. At that time Nebraska had an all-time high number of children in out-of-home care (over 6,200). The Governor ordered DHHS to prioritize cases of children age five and younger and work to resolve cases more quickly. He asked for all professionals involved with children in out-of-home care to collaborate on resolving children's issues.

September 2006: The Supreme Court held the first Through the Eyes of a Child Summit, and regional teams formed for collaboration.

Dec. 31, 2006: The number of children in out-of-home care had been reduced from 6,204 at the beginning of the year to 5,186.

Dec. 31, 2007: The number of children in out-of-home care was reduced to 5,043.

July 2008: The federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) indicated that Nebraska was not meeting seven standards of child safety, permanency, and well-being.

July 10, 2008: Governor Heineman, Chief Justice Heavican, and the FCRB Chair Georgina Scurfield, held a press conference to announce that the FCRB and DHHS would be conducting a joint study of children who had been in out-of-home care 2 years or longer. As a result, both agencies instituted routine joint meetings on cases of concern.

September 2008: DHHS unveiled its plan for child welfare and juvenile services reform, including contracting for in-home services.

Dec. 31, 2008: The number of children in out-of-home care was reduced to 4,620.

Through 2008, adoptions were at an all-time high – 572 children were adopted in 2008.

Private Agencies Assume Service Coordination

July 2009: Current child welfare change efforts began.

July 2009: State and Federal funds totaling \$7 million were given to the Lead Agencies for recruitment of staff, locating work sites, leasing of equipment, and any other purposes reasonably necessary to prepare for full implementation.

August 2009: Training of Service Coordinators began. 25 days of initial caseworker training was provided to Service Coordinators, with additional training to be provided by the Department and Lead Agency.

Summer 2009: Concerted effort made by DHHS to train caseworkers and Service Coordinators regarding Roles and Responsibilities; licensed foster parents contacted by DHHS regarding the impending change and the need to be licensed under a Lead Agency or sub-contractor.

October 2009: Contracts amended for service delivery to begin on November 1, 2009 with full statewide implementation by April 1, 2010.

October 2009: FCRB began planning on child welfare change data to be collected.

November 2009: Service contracts are signed by DHHS and the Lead Agencies totaling \$149,515,887 for services through June 30, 2011.

November 2009: FCRB began training staff on the additional data collection.

November 1, 2009: Weekly transfer of child welfare cases began in Douglas and Sarpy County. Individual case staffing occurred and one year's worth (not the entire file) of the families' case file documentation was copied and given to the Contractor.

December 31, 2009: Contracts are amended, increasing payments by \$9,677,246.

December 31, 2009: There were 4,448 children in out-of-home care.

Jan. 1, 2010: FCRB began collecting data on child welfare changes.

April 2010: Transfer of child welfare cases to Lead Agencies complete.

April 2, 2010: CEDARS announced its intention to withdraw from their contract by June. The cases of 300 children reverted to DHHS for case management.

April 16, 2010: Visinet declared bankruptcy. The cases of 1,000 children reverted to DHHS for case management. (The court later overturns this bankruptcy).

April 2010: FCRB began working with DHHS on documentation deficits and how best to report them to DHHS for correction.

May 2010: DHHS and Visinet sign an agreement that DHHS will directly pay Visinet foster parents and subcontracts, and pay Visinet \$627,270 to pay its former employees.

June 2010: The process for recording documentation deficits was in place, and the FCRB began reporting individual cases to DHHS and the Lead Agencies.

July 2010: Change of contracts. Sets monthly amounts. DHHS agrees to make payments for independent living and former wards instead of contracts. KVC contract increased as Cedars and Visinet are no longer providing services. Contract revised to front load July through September payments.

September 2010: DHHS and Boys and Girls announce they have mutually ended the contract. BGH is to be responsible for services prior to October 1.

October 15, 2010: Boys and Girls ceased operations. The cases of 1,400 reverted to DHHS for case management.

October 15, 2010: DHHS issued a press release titled *DHHS Announces Next Steps to Strengthen Child Welfare/Juvenile Services Reform*. In this announcement it stated that \$9.86 million in emergency federal funding for TANF (formerly aid to dependent children) and \$6 million dollars of state general funds was received. DHHS also announced a reduction of staff and transfer of more responsibilities to the remaining service agencies by January 1, 2011, further accelerating the Reform effort. Contracts changed that when non-medically necessary treatment is ordered by the court, the parties will work together to identify alternatives.

October 2010: Caseworkers reported they are seeking alternative employment in response to the announcement of reductions in staff.

November 8, 2010: There were 4,508 children in out-of-home care.

November 15, 2010: Governor Heineman weighed in, noting that both state and Lead Agencies have to do a better job in the future.

November 17, 2010: Seven Lincoln area State Senators hold a town hall meeting on child welfare changes.

December 2010: Contracts add case management services effective January 2011. Payment to NFC increased by \$7 million and KVC by \$12 million.

December 2010: FCRB releases a report on child welfare changes to date.

December 2010: DHHS brings in the Casey Foundation to assist with improvements to the child welfare system. DHHS and Casey met with stakeholders who identified a wide range of issues with the child welfare changes.

December 31, 2010: There were 4,301 children in out-of-home care.

Private Agencies Assume Case Management

January 1, 2011: The two remaining Lead Agencies (Nebraska Family Collaborative-NFC and KVC) assume case management duties for the children already assigned to their agencies. Lead Agency Service Coordinators become Family Permanency Specialists (FPS). DHHS caseworkers become DHHS Children and Family Outcome Monitors (CFOM's).

January 2011: The Legislature introduces a number of bills and resolutions designed to improve the child welfare system and to address the systems issues brought to the members by constituents. Proposals included:

- LB 80, which would remove section requiring another party to object to the department's plan and prove not in best interests for the court to disapprove the plan, (amended into LB 648 and passed.)
- LB 177, which would require a transition plan for youth age 16 and older, require reasonable efforts to accomplish sibling visitations, and adopt other provisions of the federal Fostering Connections Act, (passed).
- LB 199, which would require DHHS to develop a method to determine reimbursement rates, (hearing held, no further action pending LR 37).
- LB 433, which would require oversight of child welfare contracts, (held after the Governor announced a voluntary moratorium on new contracts).
- LB 598, which would reduce the length of time to permanency hearings, (hearing held, no further action).
- LB 651, which would require the FCRB to study foster parents, (hearing held, no further action).
- LR 37, which would require a legislative study of child welfare changes. (passed)

June 2011: DHHS announces KVC will get \$5.5 million more in fiscal year 2011 and \$7 million in fiscal year 2012. NFC will receive \$14.2 million in fiscal 2012 up from \$13.8 million.

June 2011: KVC announces layoffs of 75 workers.

June 17, 2011: DHHS announces Vicki Maca has been appointed as administrator of Families Matter.

June 2011: The DHHS Southeast Area Administrator resigned effective June 3, 2011, and the DHHS Eastern Service Area Administrator resigned effective July 26, 2011. These are the two areas with Lead Agencies.

June 30, 2011: There are 4,272 children in out-of-home care.

July 2011: Providers due payments from Boys and Girls receive letters from DHHS with an offer to payout 35% of what is owed to each by Boys and Girl

August 17, 2011: DHHS issued a news release that case management for an additional 620 families would be assigned to NFC by October 15, 2011. The contract increases by \$53,366,735.

State Auditor releases report

Sept. 7, 2011: State Auditor Mike Foley releases a scathing report on the state's child welfare system.

Oct. 15, 2011: Scot Adams becomes Interim Director of the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services following the Sept. 16, 2011, resignation of Todd Reckling due to health problems.

Fall 2011: LR 37 hearings are held across the state.

Nov. 16, 2011: Uta Halee Girls Village closes their residential treatment center due to declining revenue under reform.

January 6, 2012: KVC renegotiates its contract to receive an additional \$1.8 million. It withdraws as a lead agency on Feb. 22, 2012.

Jan. 18, 2012: LB 998, which changes the governance of the FCRB, was introduced.

Jan. 20, 2012: Former FCRB Director Carol Stitt resigns.

KVC withdraws as lead agency

Feb. 22, 2012: KVC announces it is withdrawing as a lead agency effective March 1, 2012. This leaves only NFC as a lead agency.

Mar. 7, 2012: Thomas Pristow was named Director of DHHS Children and Family Services Division.

Child welfare bills advance

Spring 2012: A series of child welfare bills (LB 821 on Children's Commission & Inspector General, LB 1060 on data, LB 949 on fiscal monitoring, LB 961 creating a lead agency pilot, and LB 820 on a IV-E waiver) plus LB 998, on the makeup of the FCRO, all advance.

May 30, 2012: Governor Heineman names Nebraska Children's Commission.

Changes to Foster Care Review Office take effect

July 1, 2012: The Foster Care Review Board becomes the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO). Data Coordinator Linda M. Cox is named in the bill as interim executive director.

Aug. 7, 2012: Governor Heineman names members of the FCRO Advisory Committee.

Federal officials notify state regarding child welfare fines

Aug. 21, 2012: Federal officials notified DHHS that the state would be penalized for failing to following regulations regarding the use of foster care funds. The penalty is for 2010 and additional penalties are likely for fiscal years 2011 and 2012.

Continued focus on improving outcomes for children

Aug. 30, 2012: The Foster Care Review Office Advisory Committee meets for the first time.

Fall 2012: Legislative hearings regarding the child welfare system continue.

January 20, 2013: Kim Hawekotte is named the Director of the Foster Care Review Office.

July 1, 2013: The Director of the Foster Care Review Office is added to the voting membership of the Children's Commission. (LB 269)

July 1, 2013: Changed the structure of the Children's Commission by housing staff of the Commission under the Foster Care Review Office for administrative purposes. This includes the Administrative Coordinator and newly created Policy Analyst position.

May 25, 2013: Kinship and relative foster care licensure changes take effect. (LB 265)

October 2013: All new cases of youth law violators fall under Probation. Cases formerly under OJS continue under OJS until completed or transferred to Probation. OJS continues in charge of the Youth Rehabilitation and Development Centers in Geneva and Kearney.

January 2014: Extended foster care services for young adults age 19-21 to become available.